

STATE OF THE TRAILS PROGRAM

National Trails System – Inter-Mountain Region Office:
Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer & Pony Express National Historic Trails



Who We Are, What We Do



***Oregon Trail at
Bonneville Point,
Idaho***

National Trails System – Salt Lake City (NTSL) is a National Park Service office created to administer the California, Oregon, Pony Express, and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails. Those National Historic Trails, designated by Congress, cross thousands of miles of federal, state, and private property. Our office works closely with the many public agencies, non-profit organizations, commercial interests, and individuals who own and care for trail properties. In partnership with them, we help to map and mark trails for public use, conduct historic and archeological research, develop visitor services and facilities, tell the trails' stories, and protect and preserve trail remnants along those historic routes.

Our partners are the key to our successes. This State of the Trails report summarizes what we accomplished together in 2004.

Our Mission Statement:

With our partners, we provide leadership for the use, protection, and interpretation of a diverse collection of National Historic Trails and roads, to preserve and commemorate their stories, places, legacies, and values.

Milestones, 2004: A Summary

Over the past year, we:

- ✓ Developed and implemented a strategic plan for National Historic Trails in the Intermountain Region.
- ✓ Funded seven new trails-related Challenge Cost Share projects for interpretation, research, and resource preservation, in the total amount of \$94,100.
- ✓ Marked auto tour routes for three National Historic Trails.
- ✓ Updated our NPS trails websites.
- ✓ Developed a web-based system enabling partners to upload GIS field data.
- ✓ Completed inventory and assessment, including final reports, for potential additional routes for four trails.
- ✓ Launched a new series of auto tour route interpretive guides to improve public recognition and appreciation of National Historic Trails.
- ✓ Certified an interpretive center for its thematic contributions to the Oregon, California, and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails.
- ✓ Reviewed over 80 compliance documents developed by other agencies.
- ✓ Provided significant funding support to trail organizations representing four National Historic Trails.

Programs and Partnerships

Getting out the word about National Historic Trails was a priority in 2004. To do this, we redesigned our trail websites for easier use, developed auto tour route interpretive guides for four trails in four states, worked with state transportation staff to place trail route markers along highways, sent out numerous news releases to various media outlets, and shipped 231 boxes of NPS trails brochures to our partners. As part of these outreach and partnership efforts, we also developed electronic archives of emigrant quotes and photographic images for future brochures, exhibits, and partnership uses.



Partners on the Oregon Trail, Oregon



***Tour of Hastings
Cutoff on the
California Trail, Utah***

Personal contacts with trails partners and potential partners are integral to our outreach efforts, as well. We led tours and participated in field trips, attended board and consortium meetings, spoke at conventions, and presented workshops for our partners. We met with historical societies, museum and interpretive center staff, and local trails experts along each of the trails we administer. We answered scores of questions from the public, in person and by mail, email, and telephone, assisting with research, providing information, and helping schoolchildren with their projects.

Finally, we collaborated with landowners, property managers, state parks, national parks, universities, and other federal agencies, to mark, interpret, certify, develop, research, and protect trail resources on all four National Historic Trails. Our accomplishments are described, by trail, below.

California and Oregon Trails

The Oregon and California National Historic Trails (authorized by Congress in 1978 and 1992, respectively) follow largely the same corridor from the Missouri River to Southwestern Wyoming, where they split. To that point, they share many of the same partner organizations, resources, and stories.

Trail Association Activities

The Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) is a primary trails partner. Our staffers attended OCTA board and chapter meetings, helped organize the 2004 convention in Vancouver, led tours and an interpretive media-planning workshop for attendees, and helped with initial planning for next year's OCTA convention in Salt Lake City. We also produced a new, large-format map of western historic trails for OCTA, designed a cover

for its new VHS trail video, and provided \$27,600 in monetary support for organizational needs, personnel, travel, and convention assistance.



OCTA trail tour in Eastern Oregon

Interpretation & Development

Our staff prepared final exhibit copy and provided artwork for a new exhibit explaining the purpose and significance of the national trails system. The exhibit was completed for a new Lewis and Clark interpretive center at Nebraska City, Nebraska – one of the “jumping off places” for the California National Historic Trail.

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Also at Nebraska City, trails staff completed development, design, and production of a series of new visitor center exhibits for the Old Freighters Museum. The museum is the historic home office of the shipping firm of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, who later established and operated the Pony Express. The exhibits explain the connection of the freighting operations to the California Trail.

Old Freighters Museum, Nebraska



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Working with the Caribou County (Idaho) Historical Society, we coordinated the revision and printing of 37,500 interpretive brochures, and are currently designing 14 Oregon and California Trail waysides for installation at Soda Springs. Soda Springs was a popular landmark and camping location for emigrants on the Oregon Trail.

Soda Springs, Idaho



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The Bureau of Land Management is a key partner on trails projects throughout the west. Our staff met with a Nevada BLM planning team to help develop a proposed new California Trail Interpretive Center at Elko. It is still in the design review stage. We also met with Wyoming and Utah BLM resource managers to discuss preservation and interpretive planning on the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express Trails. An agreement is now in place for our trails staff to help develop an interpretive plan for the Lander Trail over the coming year.

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Trails staff assisted Fort Vancouver NHS and the McLoughlin Memorial Association with planning and interpretation for the recently acquired McLoughlin House in Vancouver, Washington. Work included visitor experience planning, web site design, oral history interviewing, and preparation of interpretive materials.

***McLoughlin House,
Vancouver, Washington***



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We met with a Syracuse City, Utah, city planner to discuss a potential interpretive project involving three communities along the California Trail cutoff north of Salt Lake City. This project may be submitted for Challenge Cost Share funding in FY05.

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The California and Oregon National Historic Trail web sites were redesigned and uploaded for electronic publication by our staff. These web sites are a primary trails touchstone for those who are curious about trails or planning a visit to trail resources.

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We provided over \$10,300 in Challenge Cost Share funding to the Missouri Department of Transportation to manufacture and install 74 California, Oregon, and Pony Express National Historic Trail auto tour route signs in that state.

Trail Research and National Register Work



***South Pass
vicinity,
Wyoming***

The first volume of historian Will Bagley's Historic Resources Study for the Oregon and California National Historic Trails has undergone initial outside professional review, and is praised by as a "monumental achievement" and a "remarkably all-inclusive overview." The volume is one of a 1,000-page, 4-volume work that Mr. Bagley is preparing under a cooperative agreement with the NPS. Mr. Bagley is now revising the volume for government publication, and negotiating with the University of Oklahoma Press for commercial publication of a revised version. He also is completing the review drafts of the trail's narrative and social history from 1849 to 1869, an expansive bibliography, and five appendixes.

Mr. Bagley also has begun research for a National Register nomination to establish a South Pass Rural Historic District, as part of a partnership project between the Bureau of

Land Management and the National Park Service. South Pass, where several of the overland trails converged to cross the Rocky Mountains, already is listed as a National Historic Landmark, but no landmark boundaries ever were identified and formalized. Mr. Bagley's work will identify cultural landscape/historic district boundaries for South Pass, based largely on written observations by emigrants who crossed the pass. A second phase of the project, still in the proposal stage, is to define boundaries for the existing landmark, as well. Once formalized, the boundaries can be used by the Bureau of Land Management and various development interests to help protect this nationally significant place.

The Lander and Rock Spring Field Offices of the Bureau of Land Management initiated and are funding the project, with administrative and technical assistance from our national trails staff.

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Barlow Road route of the Oregon Trail

Consultants Evans-Hatch & Associates, of Astoria, Oregon, have concluded 4 ½ years of inventory and assessment, research, and report preparation for the proposed additional routes of the California, Oregon, and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails. The National Park Service received all deliverables, including a four-volume final report, an Access file of site data, electronic versions of the report and database, and some 20 boxes of indexed photographs and research materials. Our staff is preparing to deliver copies of the report and database to partner agencies who directly manage trail resources, for their review and comment. In addition, Evans-Hatch are concluding their investigations and reporting on the Central Overland Trail.

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Photographer Jim Henderson continued his multi-year effort to document faded and deteriorating emigrant inscriptions along the California and Oregon Trails. The project, supported by Challenge Cost Share funding from the National Park Service, entails nighttime photography of nearly invisible inscriptions illuminated by polarized light. Information about the photographs and inscriptions is meticulously collected and entered

into an MS Access database that can be searched by emigrant name, location, and type of inscription (tar, incised, etc.).

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A member of our staff spent many hours tracking down, acquiring, and transcribing emigrant journals for our research library and GIS database. Some 110 new journals were indexed and added to our library during the past year. One of these is the Joseph Warren Wood journal, owned by California's Huntington Library. The Huntington customarily has closely restricted access to this important resource, but agreed to provide a microfilm, which Dick Rieck from Western Illinois University then transcribed. A copy of the transcription was provided to our office and to the Huntington, to make it more accessible to researchers.

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We entered into a cooperative agreement with Hart's Rediscoveries, of Ogallala, Nebraska, to ground-truth the locations of the Oregon, California, and Pony Express Trails as they are shown on historic land maps of Nebraska, and to reconcile those maps with the physical evidence and GPS data.

***Ash Hollow
Landmark, Nebraska***



The project extends across some 12 townships, from Ogallala to Lewellen, Nebraska. Deliverables will include a map showing accurate locations of historic trails, and Government Land Office maps, USGS maps, historic aerial photographs, and field notes pertaining to each township. In addition, Mr. Hart will provide a digital photo and GPS coordinates for each historic marker or monument related to historic trails. The National Park Service contributed \$15,800 in Challenge Cost Share funding to help support this work.

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Several staff members worked with Salt Lake City trails expert Roy Tea, who has been identifying and marking historic trails for several decades, to document his extensive knowledge of Utah trails. We made several field trips with Mr. Tea to visit sites and trail segments that he has documented; cooperated with the Bureau of Land Management to document his knowledge of the trail; and began compiling Mr. Tea's research and aerial photographs of the Hastings Cutoff route through Utah. We also prepared a project-funding proposal to conduct GPS survey and related fieldwork with Mr. Tea, in

partnership with the BLM. That proposal has been highly ranked by the National Park Service for probable funding during the coming year.

Signs and Guides

Our staff helped procure trail-crossing signs for Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, and offered the university ideas for museum and wayside exhibits interpreting the impact of Western trails on Indian peoples. Marking the crossing was a student project, accomplished with help from the Kansas Department of Transportation and the City of Lawrence. In addition, we wrote, illustrated, designed, and electronically posted an auto tour route interpretive guide for the Oregon, California, and Pony Express National Historic Trails across Western Missouri and Eastern Kansas. We plan to publish hard copies of the guide once funding is available.

Trail remnant in eastern Kansas



Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail

The Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, authorized by Congress in 1978, commemorates those Latter-day Saints (Mormons) who left Illinois in 1846 and continued on to the Great Salt Lake the following year. The designated trail consists only of the original route from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah. It does not include alternative routes used by the handcart emigrants who followed in later years.

Trail Association Activities

Most of our contact with the Mormon Trail Association was through chapter officers and members. We met individuals and boards from the Utah, Nebraska, and Iowa chapters, to discuss interpretive projects, auto tour route marking and guides, and site certification. Projects are detailed below.

We also continued to work with the Mormon Trail Heritage Foundation to prepare interpretive stories for eight new waysides in western Nebraska and southeastern Wyoming. The project is supported with Challenge Cost Share funding from the National Park Service.

***Mormon Trail at
Garden Grove, Iowa***



Interpretation & Development

Eleven new wayside exhibits, developed by NPS trails staff in consultation with the Nebraska Mormon Trail Association, were installed along the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail in that state. Another exhibit will be installed in Kearney, Nebraska, once the site has been prepared.

We also redesigned the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail web site and sent a staff member to the Midwest to consult with the Iowa Mormon Pioneer Trail Association, private landowners, and museum and site managers along the Mormon Pioneer NHT. We

evaluated auto tour route signage and wayside exhibits between Nauvoo, Illinois, and Omaha, Nebraska, and provided management advice and offers of assistance.

Signs and Guides

Photographs and information gathered during the trail tour across Illinois and Iowa were used in designing and drafting an auto tour route interpretive guide for that section of the Mormon Pioneer Trail. The guide is presently in the review process. We also sent auto tour route markers and wayside exhibits to Iowa Mormon Trail Association Members to replace those that had deteriorated or been damaged.

Mormon village site at Garden Grove, on auto tour route through Iowa



Pony Express National Historic Trail

The crouching Pony Express rider and his galloping horse have become one of the mythic icons of the American West. The Pony Express National Historic Trail, authorized by Congress in 1992, crosses parts of six states.



Simpson Springs Pony Express Station in Utah's West Desert

Trail Association Activities

Trails staff consulted on various matters throughout the year with representatives from the Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, Nevada, and California chapters of the National Pony Express Association (NPEA). We provided \$5,000 in support to NPEA for organizational needs and equipment; updated and redesigned the trail web site; and provided technical support and Challenge Cost Share funding for a variety of interpretive projects, described below.

Interpretation & Development

Our staff met several times with Bureau of Land Management State Office personnel and National Pony Express Association members to plan and design a series of 11 interpretive exhibits for the Pony Express trail across Utah's West Desert. Existing BLM interpretive media along that stretch of trail is nearly 30 years old, and is badly deteriorated. We are providing \$6,900 in Cost Share funding toward this \$19,000 project.



***Consultation on Pony
Express Trail at Ibapah,
Utah***

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We also provided \$13,487 in Challenge Cost Share funds, as well as technical assistance with interpretive media development and landscape design, for a Pony Express interpretive site at This is the Place Heritage Park in Salt Lake City. The site includes a replica Pony Express cabin, which was constructed as part of a living history exhibit for the 2002 Olympics. We are helping to add a corral for Pony Express association horses, and to produce eight interpretive exhibits and an orientation panel. Extensive landscaping, also planned by our staff, and some cabin improvements are necessary to accommodate the public at this highly popular historical park.

Signs and Guides

We prepared driving directions and historical information for sites and segments on the Pony Express National Historic Trail as part of the combined auto tour route interpretive guide for Missouri and Kansas. In addition, we provided Challenge Cost Share support to the Missouri Department of Transportation to mark trail crossings on the auto tour route through that state.

Challenge Cost Share Program

The Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) provides matching funds to non-federal partners for a variety of projects and studies.

FY04 Challenge Cost Share projects have been described in detail for each trail in the narrative above. They are summarized in Table 1, below.

The National Park Service NT-SL office obligated \$94,100 in Challenge Cost Share funds across seven different projects in FY04. Four of these were interpretive planning and media projects, one was for marking an auto tour route, and one was for developing a trail resource preservation program. The seventh is an ambitious, innovative project for photographically recording emigrant inscriptions along the length of the Oregon Trail. Many of these projects involve two or more trails sharing the same corridor.

Work also continues on some CCSP projects that were funded in prior years. Those projects are described in the narrative of this report, and are not included in the summary table for Fiscal Year 2004.

Table 1. New Challenge Cost Share Projects for Fiscal Year 2004

<i>Cooperator</i>	<i>Project Purpose</i>	<i>CCS \$</i>
Caribou Historical Society, Bancroft, Idaho	Reprinting of Soda Springs brochure	\$3,000
National Pony Express Association, Riverton, Utah	Design and install exhibits across West Desert of Utah	\$6,900
National Pony Express Association, Riverton, Utah	Develop interpretation at Pony Express cabin at This is the Place Heritage Park, Salt Lake City	\$13,487
Applied Photographic Research, Oregon City, Oregon	Continuation of polarized light photo-documentation of emigrant registers along Oregon Trail	\$30,000
Missouri Department of Transportation	Auto tour route marking	\$10,319
Caribou Historical Society, Bancroft, Idaho	Artwork for Soda Springs wayside exhibits (modification of FY03 CCS project)	\$1,000
Oregon-California Trails Association, Independence, Missouri	Develop and implement trail preservation program	\$29,394
Total:		\$94,100

Site and Segment Certification Program

The National Trails System Act authorizes administering agencies to certify non-federal, trail-related properties as part of a National Historic Trail.

Our staff at NT-SL distributed a newly published brochure on trail site and segment certification, to develop greater public awareness of the program and the opportunities it offers. Certification is a formal partnership between a trail property owner or manager and the National Park Service, in which the partners agree to work together to protect the site, tell its story, and share it with visitors. The National Park Service can provide its certified trail partners with official trail logos, signs, and technical help in planning, interpretation, and many other areas.

We certified the Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa, at the request of the center's manager. The center is now officially recognized for its thematic contributions to the Oregon, California, and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails.



***Certified
interpretive center
at Council Bluffs,
Iowa***

To make certification easier, we have adopted a new, shorter and simpler certification agreement form, which has been well received by partners on several National Historic Trails. This new form, which is considerably more “user friendly” than older versions, has greatly reduced the time needed to reach a signed agreement. In addition, we have designed new certificates and are putting together a new package of materials recognizing our certification partners.

Geographic Information System

GIS is an integral part of trails programming, as its products are used routinely by in-house and independent researchers, cultural resource managers, and others. In the past year, we upgraded our GIS capabilities by preparing a web-based system for uploading GPS field data collected by trails partners

Our staff GIS coordinator has worked closely with the Oregon-California Trails Association and other partners to develop an efficient way for volunteers to collect and transmit field-collected GPS data to our database. As a result, we now have a web-based system that our partners can access and use to upload their field data into our growing GIS database. This spring, we will be training a select group of dedicated volunteers to collect the historic and geographic information needed for our mapping database.

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We continue to oversee a Cooperative Agreement with the University of Utah's Department of Geography to manage the database for the four trails that we administer. This year, we built annotation layers into our database for high potential sites, non-high-potential sites, routes, and segments.

Linked to this new capability, we are creating a database of journal quotes relating to important sites along the California, Oregon, Pony Express, and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails. For example, a campsite on the combined California-Oregon route might have electronic entries of journal quotes from a California-bound and an Oregon-bound emigrant. This database will allow researchers using the GIS database easily to find emigrant descriptions of sites along the trails.

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We have scanned and printed a privately owned, original copy of a map of John C. Fremont's 1842 exploration of the Rocky Mountains and 1843-44 exploration of Oregon and Northern California, published in Fremont's 1845 report.

Resource Advocacy and Protection

As national policy continues to advocate energy-related development, construction of wells, pipelines, and wind energy devices on or near national historic trails is burgeoning across plains and mountain states.

Through the year, our staff continually responded to environmental assessments of proposed energy developments, cell towers, highway improvements, private construction, and other development activities along National Historic Trails. We examined over 80 project compliance documents, including Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements, Findings of No Significant Impact, Resource Management Plans, and assorted consultation letters. Approximately 25% of these required one or more follow-up actions.

Energy development-related resource threats arise most frequently in Wyoming, where productive, accessible drilling and wind energy locales often are identified on or near the corridor(s) of the Oregon, California, Pony Express, and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails. Our staff continued working closely with several Wyoming offices of the Bureau of Land Management to assess potential impacts, develop mitigation alternatives, and help prepare programmatic agreements for many such projects. On several occasions, we made field visits to proposed project sites to consult with the Bureau of Land Management, oil company representatives, State Historic Preservation Officers, and various trail partners.

Wyoming Bureau of Land Management personnel invited the National Park Service to participate in an interpretive planning project on the Lander Trail (a mitigation action to offset impacts to the Lander Trail corridor), and consulted with us on a permitting plan for handcart use on the Rocky Ridge segment of the combined Mormon Pioneer/Oregon/California/Pony Express National Historic Trails.



***Martin's
Cove,
Wyoming***

We also participated in the public review process for the congressionally authorized lease of Martin's Cove (on the combined four-trail corridor) to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and filed objections to a BLM Wyoming State Office proposal to deem a trail segment as historically significant for National Register and protection purposes only if that segment is specifically described in emigrant trail journals. The latter proposal drew objections from SHPO, the National Park Service, the Oregon-California Trails Association, and others.

Trails staff joined trail partners in urging a Nevada town not to sacrifice the remaining ruts of the Beckwourth Route of the California Trail for construction of a town park. The town reconsidered its plans, and the Beckwourth ruts were saved.

In addition, we awarded \$29,394 in Challenge Cost Share matching funds to the Oregon-California Trails Association to develop and implement a training program for trail preservation. To accomplish this, OCTA will conduct a series of training seminars at nine sites over the next three years. Instructors will present methods for identifying, documenting, and mapping historic trails, and information on preservation laws and regulations.

Conclusions

In Fiscal 2004, staff at the Salt Lake City national trails office strengthened our customer service and partnership efforts and raised public awareness of national historic trails.

To meet our responsibilities to trails resources and the public, we cultivated new and existing partnerships, collaborated with sister agencies, and developed numerous new exhibits, publications, and web sites for trails visitors. To meet our broader professional responsibilities, we routinely contributed to Service-wide discussions of trails issues and participated in a variety of trails-related historical forums.

Over the coming year, we will continue to consolidate our programs, enhance our public service effort, and build a growing constituency for national historic trails.

Emigrant wagon exhibit

